



American
Dental
Hygienists'
Association

Re: Support for HB 78—Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March 7, 2011

Dear Representative Herron and Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

The Alaska State Dental Hygienists' Association (ASDHA) supports House Bill 78 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program. This legislation addresses the shortage of certain health care professionals in the state and will increase the number and improve the distribution of health care professionals that provide direct patient care.

Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. This legislation would allow Alaska to compete with other states in the recruitment of numerous providers and help fill the alarming number of vacancies that exist.

House Bill 78 provides incentives for dental professionals, including dentists and dental hygienists. While current practice act limitations exist for direct patient care by dental hygienists, we are hopeful HB 78 will attract more dentists and dental hygienists to our state and to rural communities. With up to eighteen dental hygiene students graduating from Alaska universities yearly, we believe HB 78 would provide an additional incentive for them to stay.

The ASDHA supports HB 78 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Gail Walden, RDH, BSDH
Alaska State Dental Hygienists' Association